

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) A unit for feeding capsules onto a machine for filling capsules, the unit comprising:

a hopper for containing the capsules; the hopper having a first axis of rotation, being fitted with a number of feed channels, and rotating continuously about said first axis to move said feed channels about the first axis; ~~and~~

each feed channel having a longitudinal second axis and receiving the capsules successively from said hopper;

each feed channel being positioned such that said second axis forms an angle of other than 90° with a reference plane perpendicular to said first axis; and

a first transfer wheel substantially coaxial with said first axis and connected to said hopper to rotate about the first axis; the first wheel having a substantially truncated-cone-shaped first outer peripheral surface, and a number of first seats formed in said first surface, equal in number to said feed channels, and each first seat being adapted to receive at least one of said capsules from at least one of said feed channels.

2. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 1, wherein each feed channel is positioned such that said second axis intersects said first axis.

3. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said feed channels are connected to said hopper so that said second axes are equally spaced about said first axis.

4. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 1, comprising a number of supporting bars connected to said hopper and each supporting bar having at least two of said feed channels; each supporting bar having a longitudinal plane of symmetry containing said first axis.

5. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 4, wherein said supporting bars are connected to said hopper so that said longitudinal planes of symmetry are equally spaced about said first axis.

6. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the feed channels of each supporting bar are positioned with said respective second axes substantially parallel to one another and to said longitudinal plane of symmetry.

7. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the feed channels of each supporting bar are positioned with said respective second axes substantially converging with one another towards said longitudinal plane of symmetry.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently amended) A unit as claimed in Claim [[8]] 1, comprising:
a second transfer wheel rotatable continuously about a third axis of rotation substantially parallel to said first axis; and
a first transfer station connecting said first and said second wheel to each other; said second wheel having a substantially truncated-cone-shaped second outer peripheral surface and a number of second seats formed in said second surface, and each second seat being adapted to receive at least one of said capsules from at least one of said first seats.

10. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 9, comprising:
a third transfer wheel rotatable continuously about a fourth axis of rotation substantially parallel to said first and said third axis; and
a second transfer station connecting said second and said third wheel to each other; said third wheel having a number of third seats substantially parallel to said fourth axis, and each third seat being adapted to receive at least one of said capsules from at least one of said second seats.

11. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 10, wherein said feed channels are connected to said hopper so that said second axes are equally spaced about said first axis; said first, second, and third seats being equally spaced about the respective said first, third, and fourth axis.

12. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 10, comprising a number of supporting bars connected to said hopper, each supporting bar having at least two feed channels, the supporting bars having longitudinal planes of symmetry equally spaced about said first axis; the feed channels of each supporting bar being positioned with said second axes substantially parallel to one another and to said longitudinal plane of symmetry.

13. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 12, wherein the feed channels of each supporting bar are associated with a group of said first seats; the first seats in each group of first seats being spaced about said first axis with a first spacing.

14. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 13, wherein each pair of adjacent supporting bars has a pair of adjacent feed channels; each pair of feed channels being associated with a pair of said first seats; and the first seats in each said pair of first seats being spaced about said first axis with a second spacing.

15. (Previously presented) A unit as claimed in Claim 14, wherein said second seats are spaced about said third axis with the same spacing as said first seats, and said third seats are equally spaced about said fourth axis with a third spacing substantially smaller than said first spacing and substantially greater than said second spacing.